



Title	YouthScape Network Evaluation and Planning
Key Words	Participatory evaluation and planning, Network Dynamics, youth engagement, International Institute for Child Rights and Development, Canada
Reference	Jacques M. Chevalier, “YouthScape Network Evaluation and Planning”, Report Submitted to the Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), January 2008
Context	<p>“YouthScape is a National Initiative to Build Resilient Communities by Engaging Youth located in five cities in Canada: Halifax, Riviere des Prairies (Montreal), Thunder Bay, Saskatoon and Calgary. The overall objective of the initiative is to increase the resiliency of communities by leveraging the capacity of young people in the planning and implementing of community development initiatives. YouthScape focuses on engaging excluded or marginalized youth in an effort to build a stronger community and to create long term sustainable systems change that links young peoples’ agency with the agency of their communities and local governments. The Initiative is being funded over three years by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the United Way of Calgary and Area and community stakeholders.”</p> <p>“The International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) is a facilitator for YouthScape. IICRD’s role is to increase communities’ capacity to facilitate sustainable change, create a learning community and produce a body of knowledge to inform and leverage policy and practice at the level of local government, and across provincial and federal governments in Canada. There are four distinct roles (and ways) the learning, evaluation and research is being supported: development evaluation (with a national DE and community DEs), community-youth capacity building (with a national DE and community DEs), learning community (with TIG) and finally research.” (Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, Research Design, Working Document, October 2007)</p>

On November 8-9 2006, IICRD held a Gathering Learning Symposium in Boscoville 2000 (Montréal) and invited Jacques Chevalier from SAS² Dialogue to facilitate a 2.5 hour evaluation and strategic planning of the national YouthScape initiative, held at the end of the two-day symposium. The exact purpose of this exercise in collaborative inquiry and engagement was determined with IICRD (Natasha Blanchet-Cohen) prior to the symposium.

Purpose

To assess levels of interaction between YouthScape teams and strategies to improve collaborative ties and to gain a better understanding of the SAS² approach to evaluation.

Process Summary

The 2.5 hour session was divided into 5 steps:

Step 1: Introduction

The facilitator explained the overall objectives of the exercise using the Facebook metaphor for messages to be exchanged between YouthScape teams — messages about their current and expected levels of interaction and collaboration.

Step 2: Team formation and totem identification

Participants divided themselves into what they considered to be natural teams, identified a totem to represent each team, and then introduced themselves to other teams.

Step 3: Current and expected levels of interaction

Each team used rating cards to assess and record their current and ideal levels of interaction with members of their own team, with other teams, and with YouthScape as a whole. Teams recorded their ratings by placing colorful stickers on a diagonal line drawn on cards and showing a scale of 0 to 5. Stickers representing insects or bugs were used for the current level of interaction, and stickers with the word “Excellent” for the ideal level.



Step 4: Suggestions to achieve expected levels of interaction

Teams wrote on the back of each card concrete and realistic suggestions about what could be done to improve collaborative ties, when relevant. These suggestions had to include a lie or an unrealistic expectation to be communicated to another team of their choice (to be detected by participants at the end of the session).

Step 5: Cards sent, received and analyzed

Each team prepared two decks of the same rating cards and sent cards from one deck to the corresponding teams. Each team placed

the rating cards they kept for themselves on a flipchart, in a top row labelled “SENT TO”. They placed the cards they received from other teams in a second row labelled “RECEIVED FROM”, in the same order as in the first row. Each team then compared the messages they sent to and received from other teams and discussed the expectations recorded on the cards.



Step 6: Open bilateral negotiation fair

Each team discussed with teams of their choice their mutual expectations and means to improve existing ties. Negotiating teams wrote down the agreements they reached and issues pending further discussion, and then launched a helium balloon (tied down to tables) to announce the end of their successful negotiation.

Step 7: Bilateral agreement plenary

All teams were invited to present the agreements they reached with other teams, with helium balloons launched to celebrate the agreements once more. Teams also had to guess which of the suggestions recorded on their cards were lies.

Step 8: YouthScape plenary

All teams formed a circle where each team presented its suggestions or ideas regarding interactions with YouthScape as a whole, starting with the phrase “*Imagine if...*”. After each team presentation, participants were asked to take one step closer to the center of the circle and celebrate the “*Imagine if...*” idea by blowing soap bubbles from small bottles handed out to every participant.

Network Analysis

Teams

Network diagrams

The natural teams formed at the beginning of the exercise are:

Owls: Advisory team

Eagles: Youths & TIG (Taking It Global)

Thunderbirds: IICRD (International Institute for Child Rights and Development)

Butterflies: DEs (Development Evaluators)

Marmottes: Administrators

Beavers: Coordinators

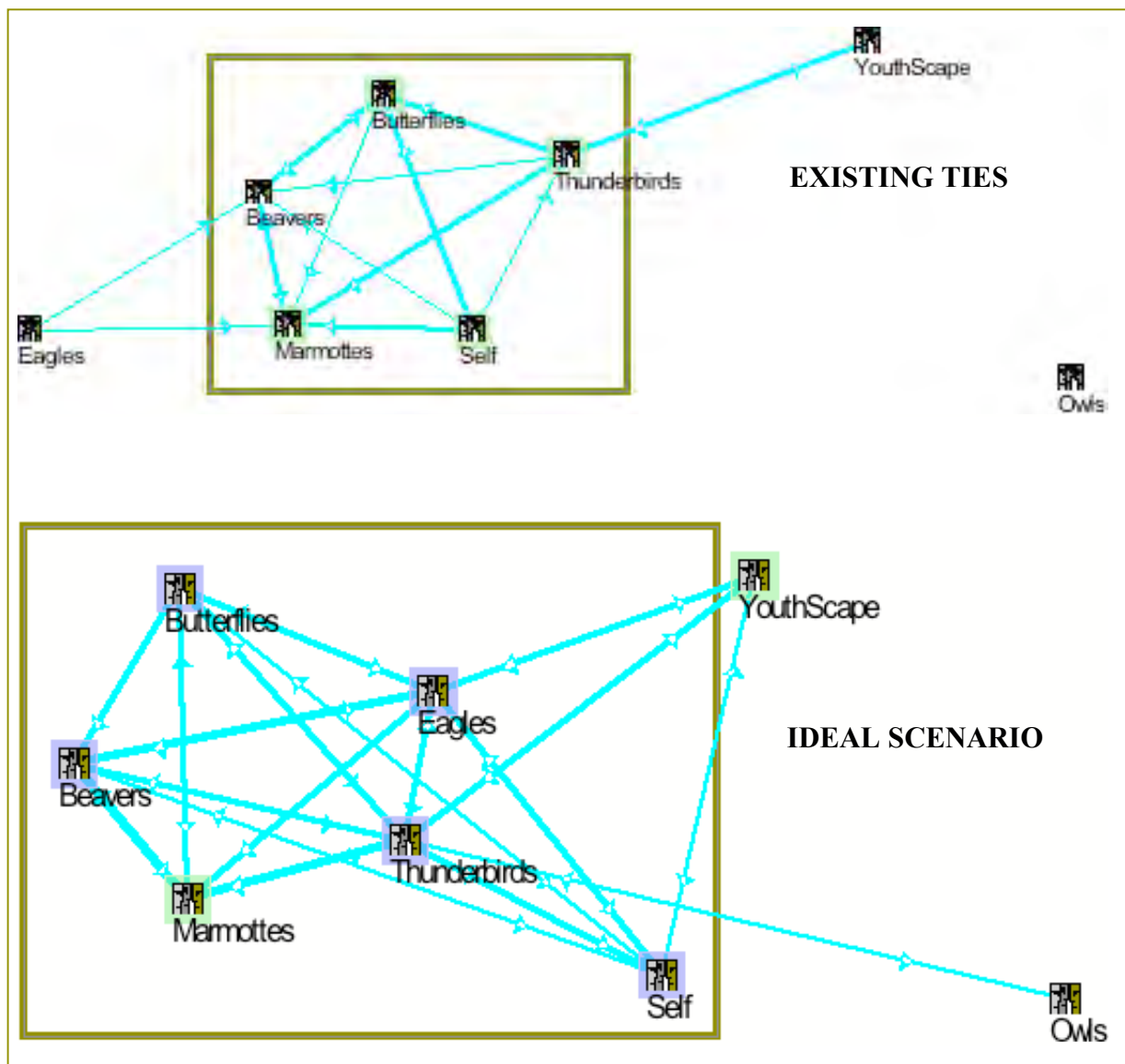
YouthScape: all teams

Self: team members interacting among themselves

Team ratings of their current and ideal levels of interaction (with “Self”, with other teams, and with YouthScape as a whole) are summarized in the following network diagrams (using InFlow 3.1).



Figure 1: Existing ties and ideal scenario



Team legend:

Owls: Advisory team

Thunderbirds: IICRD

Marmottes: Administrators

Beavers: Coordinators

Butterflies: DEs (Development Evaluators)

Eagles: Youths & TIG (Taking It Global)

YouthScape: all teams

Self: team members interacting among themselves

* One-way **arrows** indicate ties rated 3, 4 or 5 in one direction only. Two-way arrows indicate ties rated 3, 4 or 5 in both directions. The **closeness** of teams indicates stronger relationships.

General observations

The upper diagram in Figure 1 shows existing ties, while the lower diagram represents the ideal scenario. These diagrams and the network statistics provided by InFlow point to several general observations.

1. Currently the **Owls** (Advisory) and the **Eagles** (Youths & TIG) tend to interact weakly with other teams and with **YouthScape** as a whole.
2. Of the 49 potential ties that all teams could develop, 16 strong ties rated 3 to 5 currently exist, for a network **density of 33%**.
3. In the **ideal scenario** reflecting team expectations, network density would practically double and go up to **61%**, with 34 strong ties (rated 3 to 5) developed out of 56 potential ties. **Closeness** or access to other team members, to other teams, and to YouthScape as a whole (via a minimum of hoops) would also double, from 37% to 74%.
4. The **Thunderbirds** (IICRD) have the highest level of **betweenness** or control over what flows in both the current network and the ideal scenario (by acting as a link in the shortest paths between other teams).

From/to all other teams

Figure 2 shows how each team perceives its current level of interaction with all other teams as a whole (blue line) and their desired level of interaction with them (red line). Figure 3 shows how all other teams as a whole perceive their current level of interaction with each team (blue line) and at what level they would like to interact with this team (red line).

Note that red boxes around team names point to significant differences between current and ideal levels of interaction.

These two figures point to the following observations:

5. The **Eagles** (Youths & TIG) have higher expectations in regards to increasing their level of interaction with others.
6. Project teams expect to increase their level of interaction mostly with the **Eagles** (Youths & TIG), the **Beavers** (Coordinators), and the **Thunderbirds** (IICRD), and less so with the Marmottes (Administrators), the Owls (Advisory), and the Butterflies (DE).

Figure 2: From these teams, to all other teams

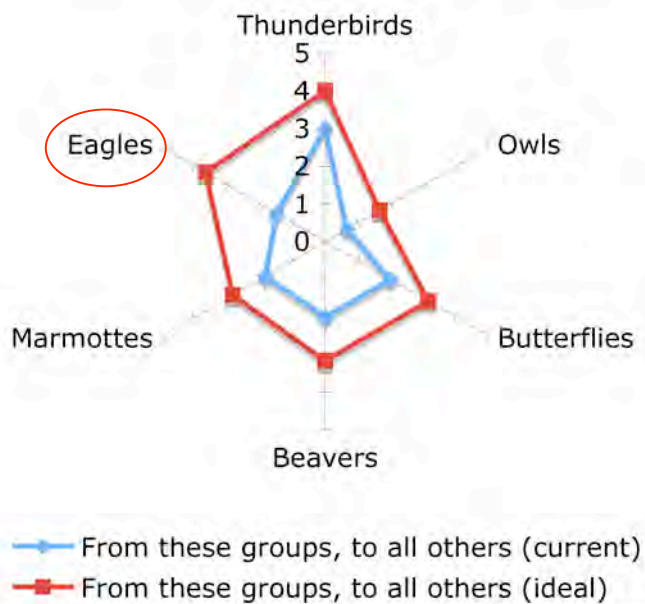
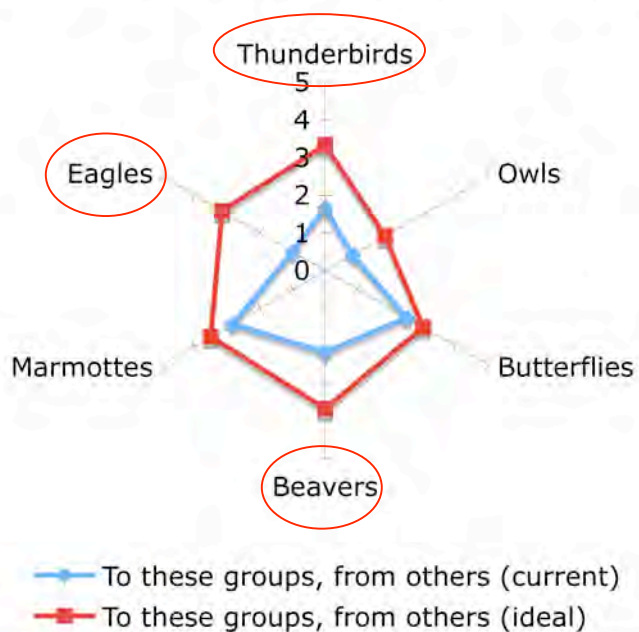


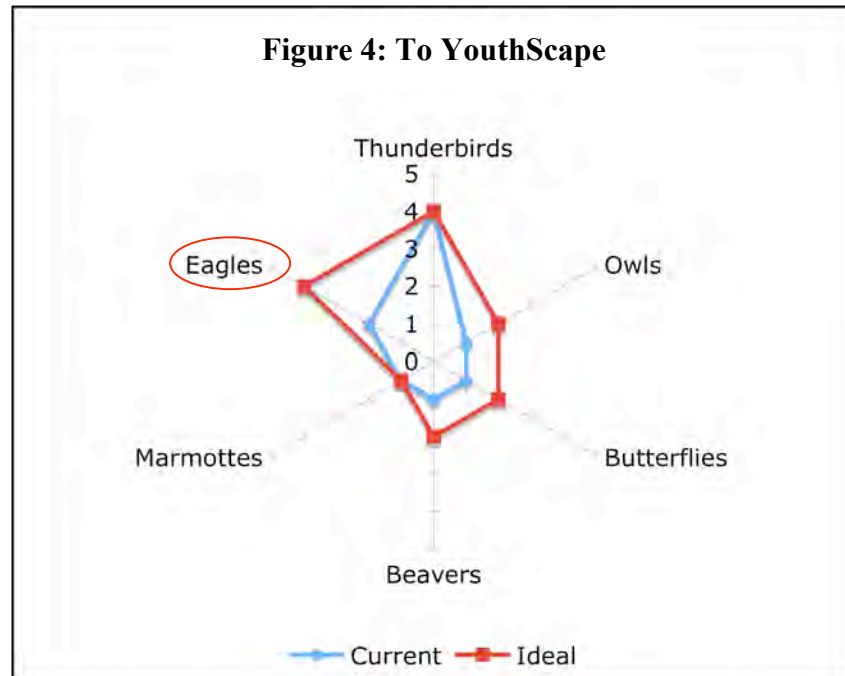
Figure 3: To these teams, from all other teams



To YouthScape as a whole

Figure 4 shows how every team perceives its current level of interaction with YouthScape as a whole (blue line) and their desired level of interaction as well (red line).

The **Eagles** (Youths & TIG) express the highest interest in having stronger ties to YouthScape as a whole, with ratings going from the current level 2 to the ideal level 4 (2/4). They suggest this can be done by developing a better national communication strategy, with online access to individual updates, as needed.



The Butterflies (DE, 1/2) would like to see YouthScape give them permission to do DE and embrace it!

The Owls (Advisory, 1/2) recommend that YouthScape clarify its role, maintain its annual meeting, and ensure the strategic direction of the overall project.

While they need DEs and IICRD to act as ongoing links with other teams, the Marmottes (Administrators, 1/1) need to attend national gatherings and think that monthly conference calls might be useful to YouthScape as a whole.

Like the Marmottes, the Thunderbirds (IICRD, 4/4) are satisfied with their current level of interaction with YouthScape as a whole. They nonetheless propose a shift in YouthScape interaction, with a greater emphasis on developing a national learning community that further builds relations and trust.

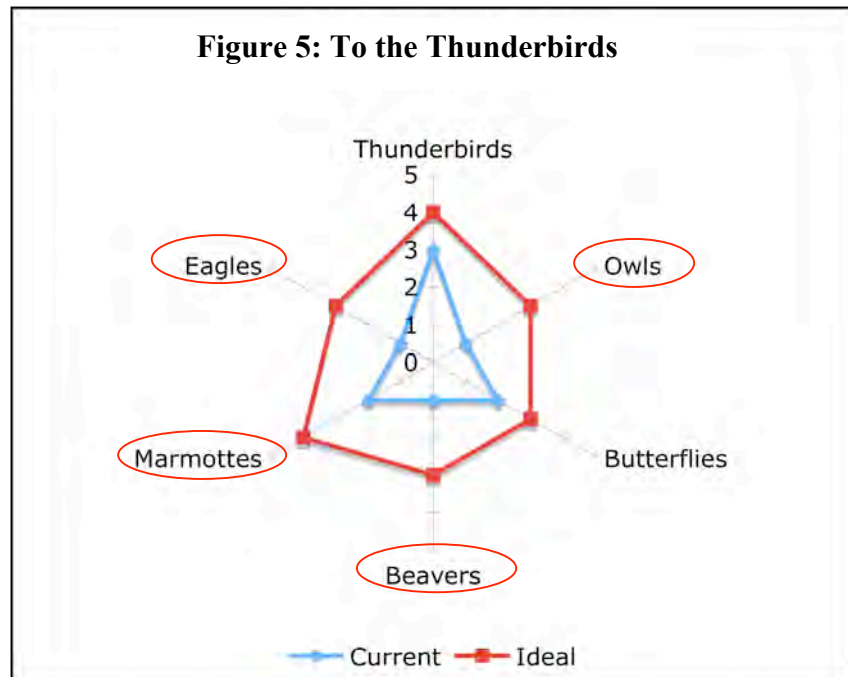
Team Profiles

Individual team profiles also help understand the YouthScape network and team expectations. The following analysis presents a radar-shaped figure for each team. Each figure (e.g., “To Thunderbirds”) shows how all teams perceive their current (blue line) and ideal level (red line) interaction with the radar team.

To avoid repetition, we focus the analysis on the findings and the comments recorded for these figures — perceptions and expectations communicated to each radar team (e.g., To the Thunderbirds). Radars that bring together the perceptions and expectations communicated from a radar team to all others (e.g., “From Thunderbirds”) are presented in Annex 1.

As already noted, the **IICRD Thunderbirds** occupy a central position in YouthScape and are expected to interact more with other teams. As Figure 5 shows:

Higher expectations:
Thunderbirds (IICRD)
and Eagles (Youths & TIG)



The Marmottes (Administrators, 2/4) would like IICRD to visit each community and meet with them at national gatherings and have monthly conference calls.

Likewise, the Beavers (Coordinators, 1/3) propose to have conference calls with IICRD every 2 weeks starting immediately, with an emphasis on exchanges, not requests.

The Owls (Advisory, 1/3) need to receive more accessible information from IICRD and assistance in brokering opportunities to work with teams and individuals acting as resource persons.

While the Butterflies (DE, 2/3) value the “quality” contact they already have with IICRD, they wish to maintain their autonomy. They want to receive more support through team work, especially when dealing with complex issues at the community level.

When reflecting on their own team work, the Thunderbirds (IICRD, 3/4) wish to schedule two-days meetings with Youth Community Coordinator (Jorge) every 2 weeks; review plans, budgets, roles, responsibilities, and time; maximize clarity, efficiency, and support in the work they do; and see IICRD Executive Director (Philip) engage more in strategic gatherings and advocacy work.

As we see from Figure 6, the **Youths & TIG Eagles** interact weakly with the other teams, yet they hope to significantly increase their level of interaction among themselves, with other teams, and with YouthScape as a whole. Others also expect to strengthen their ties to the Eagles. More specifically (and in order of importance):

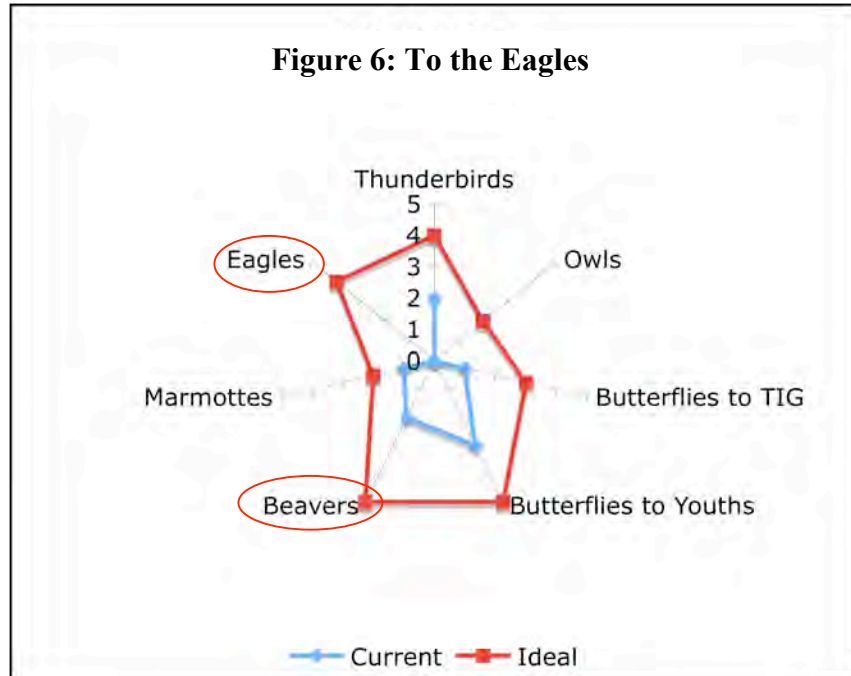
The Beavers (Coordinators, 2/5) wish youth to be represented in YouthScape management and consulted through conference calls and meetings on their own time schedules.

The Thunderbirds (IICRD, 2/4) think the number of youths should go up from 1 to 4, and TIG from 2 to 4. Jorge’s role should be reviewed and more attention paid to relationships rather than tools. TIG should join the communication committee, get more training, and develop a step-by-step “how-to-use” plan.

As a team, the Eagles (Youths & TIG, 0/4) recognize they’ve had no team interaction prior to this gathering and should maintain interaction through internet and conferences every 6 months.

Other teams have lower expectations. the Butterflies (DE: sent 1/3 to TIG and 3/5 to Youths) observe that the number of youths and TIG is unevenly distributed in communities. They would like youths to acknowledge the necessity of DE work and think local people should be more present in TIG activities.





The Marmottes (Administrators, 1/2) are of the view that YouthScape and TIG should encourage youths to be more involved in organizational work and connections between communities.

The Owls (Advisory, 0/2) need support from the Eagles to set up their own Facebook. They think the Eagles should consult the Thunderbirds (IICRD) and be more transparent. Also specific youths should be invited to attend relevant events.

Moderate expectations:

Beavers
(Coordinators)
and Butterflies (DEs)

Although slightly less pronounced, the expectations conveyed to the Beavers (Coordinators) and the Butterflies (DEs) are many.

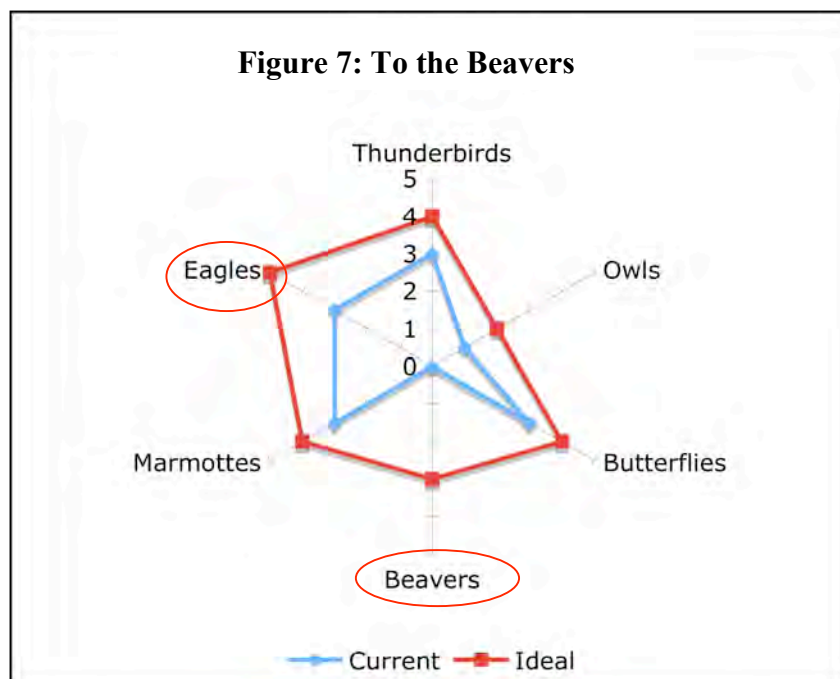
Suggestions on how to increase interaction with the **Beaver Coordinators** (Figure 7) come mostly from the Eagles and the Beavers themselves.

The Beavers (Coordinators, 0/3) propose to strengthen their own team work within 2 or 3 months by reallocating time to set up a Facebook or Blog and clarifying their role as individuals and as a team within the project.

The Eagles (Youths & TIG, 3/5) wish the Beaver Coordinators to keep them well informed on all ongoing decisions and developments. They should pass on documents, reports, and minutes and let the Eagles decide what communication is relevant. Youths should sit in and participate in team meetings that include

DEs and main staff. Lastly, contributors should value the Beavers' coordination from a financial perspective.

While the Thunderbirds (IICRD, 3/4) recognize the challenges of staff turnover, they suggest that the Beavers reinforce project values, focus on learning community support, bring more clarity to communication, nudge strategic interventions, and produce more support materials and documentation on research and lessons learned.



As for the Butterflies (DE, 3/4), they appreciate the great interaction they have with the Beavers but need to “love” them more and serve them (and their leadership service) better through quality support and frequent interaction (in some communities).

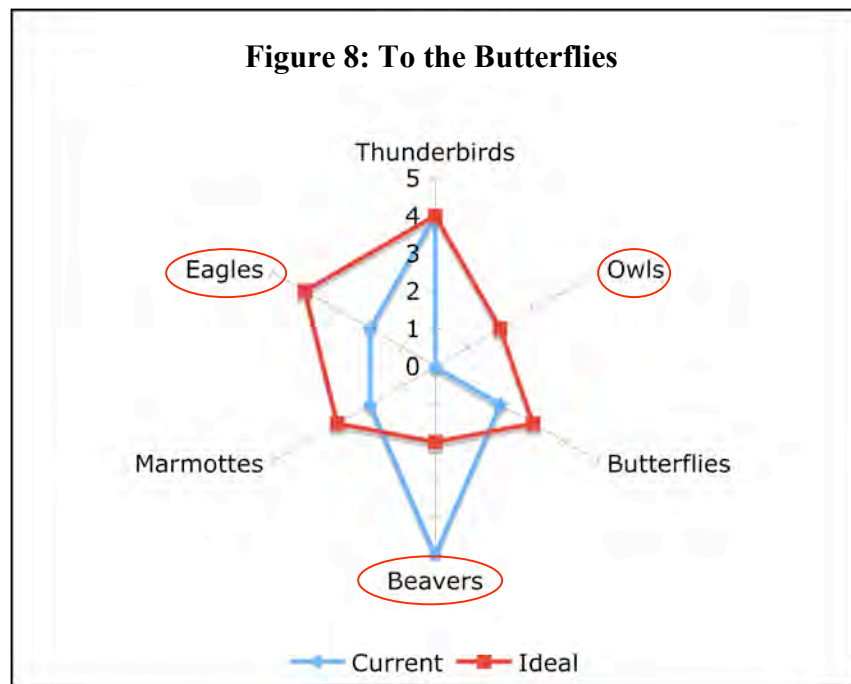
The Marmottes (Administrators, 3/4) observe that the Beavers are different in each community and that Tbay and Halifax are in the process of developing a coordinating team (administrators, coordinators, and DE).

The Owls (Advisory, 1/2) would like the Beavers to focus on specific and relevant discussions and IICRD should keep the Owls informed of these discussions.



It is clear from Figure 8 that expectations for the **DE Butterflies** to improve their interaction with other teams come mostly from the Beavers (Coordinators), the Eagles (Youths & TIG), and the Owls (Advisory).

The Beavers (Coordinators, 5/2) wish at this time to interact less with the Butterflies so as to gain more self-sufficiency. They suggest that the DEs need to focus on evaluation, not on coordination. They should continue to engage in real conversations about clarity in roles over the next 6 months.



The Eagles (Youths and TIG, 2/4) need monthly feedback about role definitions, project direction at the local level, and ways to work and build together.

The Owls (Advisory, 0/2) would like the lead Butterfly DE to be more transparent with IICRD and engage in two-way feedback with the advisory team.

According to the Marmottes (Administrators, 2/3), while the Butterflies play an essential role in the decision-making process otherwise led by the Beavers (Coordinators) and the Thunderbirds (IICRD), they are not decision-makers as such. This creates a delicate balance and tension between roles and may be the source of conflict.

The Thunderbirds (IICRD, 4/4) are generally satisfied with their high level of interaction with the Butterflies. They nonetheless suggest that the Butterflies support Tbay in hiring and maintaining continuity in their work. As DEs, the Butterflies should clarify the learning loop, including links in the research process between the local DEs and the national DE team. They should also address issues of confidentiality and communications.

Lower expectations:

Marmottes
(Administrators)
and Owls (Advisory)

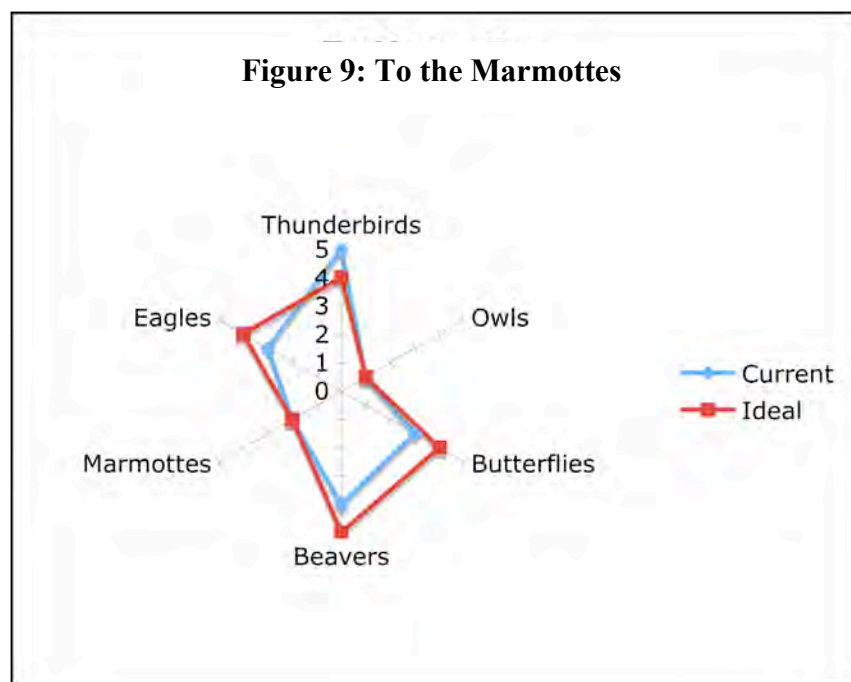
Fewer expectations are communicated to the Marmottes (Administrators) and the Owls (Advisory) (Figure 9).

The Thunderbirds (IICRD, 4/3) wish to interact less with the **Marmotte Administrators** and suggest they focus more of their work on coordinators.

The Eagles (Youths & TIG, 3/4) would like the Marmottes Administrators to share more of their experience, attend youth events to better understand the role of youth, and clarify the difference between their roles and the Beavers’.

The Beavers (Coordinators, 4/5) would like the Marmottes to manage all their communications to the DE Butterflies, through weekly coffee conversations and monthly meetings.

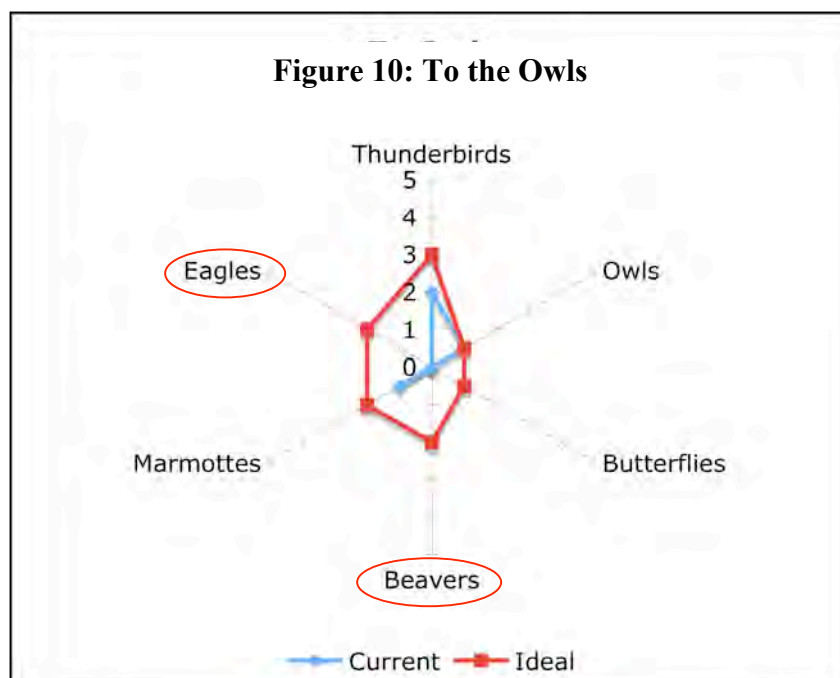
The Butterflies (DE, 3/4) would like in turn to interact more often and share more of their energy with the Marmottes.



As a team, the Marmottes (Administrators, 2/2) should meet twice a year at National gatherings. They should arrive a day early to discuss the project from the "administrators' perspective."

The most significant expectations conveyed to the **Owl Advisors** come from the Beavers (Coordinators) and the Eagles (Youths & TIG), as recorded in Figure 10.

The Beavers (Coordinators, 0/2) think that the gaps between their team and the Owls should be bridged, with the assistance of the Thunderbirds (IICRD), so that both teams can understand what each other has to offer.



Likewise, the Eagles (Youths & TIG, 0/2) wish to have better access to the Owls, ask them questions as needed, and gain knowledge through dialogue.

The Thunderbirds (IICRD, 2/3) would like to eventually draw on the Owls' expertise concerning issues of diversity, connections with the private sector, MCC next phase planning, and ideas for strategic actions and advocacy.

The Marmottes (Administrators, 1/2) need clarifications on roles and relationships and might need to attend more meetings with the Owls.

The Butterflies (DE, 0/1) have no direct contact with the Owls and could draw great experience from them while also creating better awareness of what DE is about.

The Owls (Advisory, 1/1) may increase their own team work if necessary, by interacting on a one-to-one basis and seeking the expertise they need.

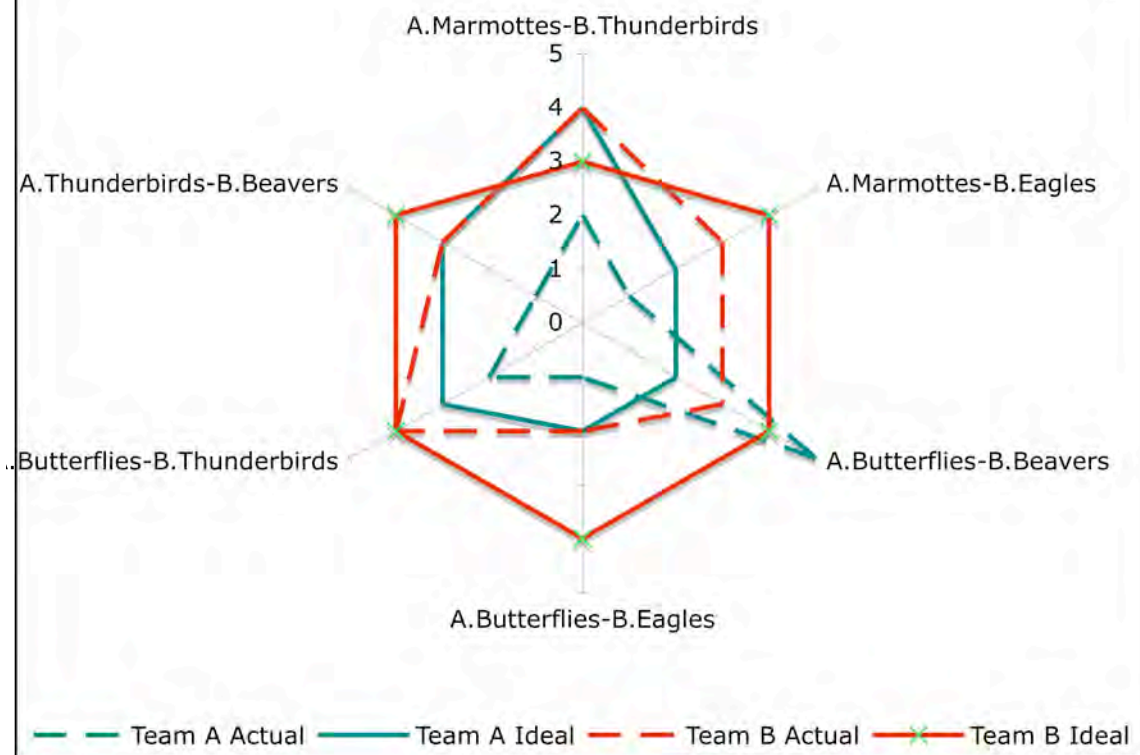
Dissonant Perceptions and Expectations

Some YouthScape teams share similar views on the degree to which they interact or should interact. For instance, the Eagles (Youths & TIG) think they interact with the Owls (Advisory) at level 1 and would like to interact more (at level 2). Meanwhile the Owls rate their interaction with the Eagles at level 0 and would like to go up to level 1. There is no significant gap or dissonance between the two sets of ratings.

Of the 30 ratings describing YouthScape team interactions and expectations, about two thirds involve shared views of current and ideal levels of interaction. The remaining **one third**, described in Figure 11, point to significant differences between team perceptions and expectations.

- The Marmottes (Administrators) wish to interact more (from 2 to 4) with the Thunderbirds (IICRD) who in turn would prefer to interact less (going from 4 to 3).
- The Marmottes (Administrators) and the Eagles (Youths & TIG) want to interact more, but the Marmottes want to go from level 1 to level 2 while the Eagles want to go as high as level 4.
- The Beavers (Coordinators) want their interaction with the Butterflies (DEs) to go up from 3 to 4, whereas the Butterflies think their interaction is at level 5 and should go down to level 2. Likewise, the Eagles (Youths & TIG) would like to interact a lot more with the Butterfly DEs (from 2 to 4), a feeling that is not shared by the Butterflies who propose to go from level 1 to level 2 only.
- The Butterflies (DEs) think they interact with the Thunderbirds (IICRD) at level 2, while the Thunderbirds rate the interaction at level 4.
- The Beavers (Coordinators) wish to interact more with the Thunderbirds (IICRD), by going from level 1 to level 3, while the latter think their starting point is at level 3 and should go to 4.

Figure 11: Dissonant ratings



It is important to note that YouthScape teams did not coose or have time to discuss any of these dissonant ratings during their final discussion of mutual expectations and tentative agreements (recorded below).

Agreements

Three tentative agreements emerged from the bilateral discussions between YouthScape teams held at the end of the excrise.

The Thunderbirds (**IICRD**) and the Eagles (**Youths & TIG**):

IICRD agrees to (a) relay more clearly to the youth what the role of the IICRD is in the YouthScape initiative; (b) work with TIG at creating engaging solutions to improve transparency; (c) involve more youth in gatherings and the planning of meetings.

The Beavers (**DE**) and the Marmottes (**Coordinators**):

While giving the other team the benefit of the doubt regarding their intentions and principles, the DEs will give the Coordinators more “breathing room” and begin to focus more on community activity.

The Owls (**Advisory**) and the Marmottes (**Administrators**):

The two teams recognize the importance for Administrators to further participate in meetings and gatherings involving the Advisory. This will enable the Administrators to draw more on the strengths of the Advisory and bring them in as resource persons more often, at least when dealing with issues that go beyond daily tasks and conversations.

Observations on the Process



The objectives of the session were largely met. The unique process of evaluation and team building designed for this event enabled participants to assess their levels of interaction and explore strategies to improve collaborative ties. It also gave participants a better understanding of the SAS² approach to reconciling rigor and efficiency (“being serious”) with playful interaction and appreciation (“having fun”).

The short time available (2.5 hours) to attain these goals was limited, at some cost to the breadth and depth of YouthScape’s thinking and planning emerging from this “Facebook” exercise. With more time participants could have reached a greater number of agreements and reflected on the experience itself and the potential interaction between DE and SAS². All good ideas and comments could have been duly recorded and compiled, including follow-up plans to implement these ideas or continue the discussion. In hindsight, despite the very rich and useful results obtained, a full-day version of this session (with some additional steps) could have generated a solid blueprint for team-building actions extending over several months.

All the same, feedback received during and after the event indicates that “people found it extremely useful and very well facilitated. Several commented on really enjoying the opening, and the introduction of evaluation as appreciation. The activity was the perfect one and the timing bang on — those conversations were very fruitful. Interestingly, it has also contributed to some shifts already, in bringing out the role of the coordinators for instance. The selection of the teams actually was very worth it, and proved to help in moving the process forward.” (Natasha Blanchet-Cohen)

Annex 1: Ratings of current and ideal interactions sent by each YouthScape team

Figure 12: Sent by the Thunderbirds (IICRD)

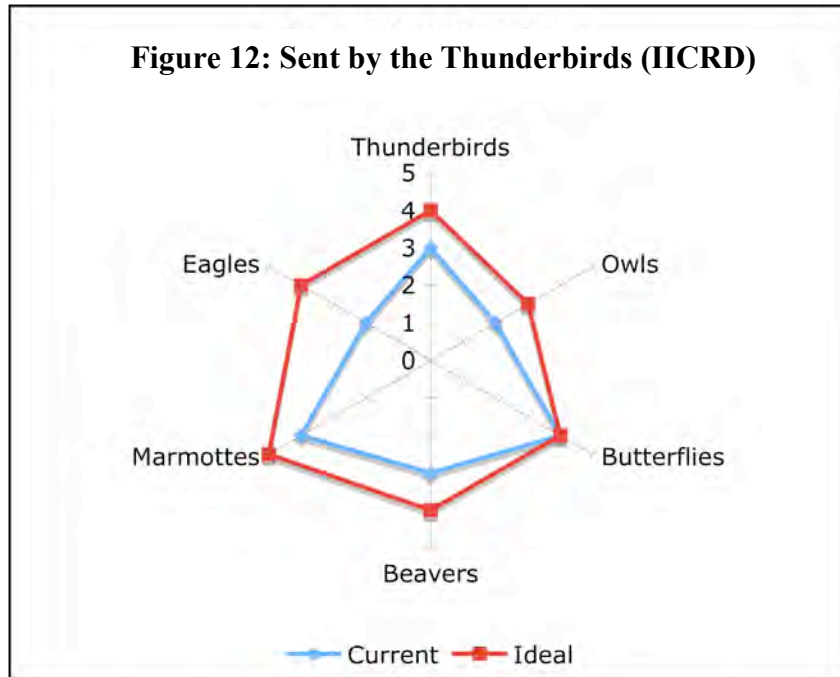


Figure 13: Sent by the Eagles (Youths & TIG)

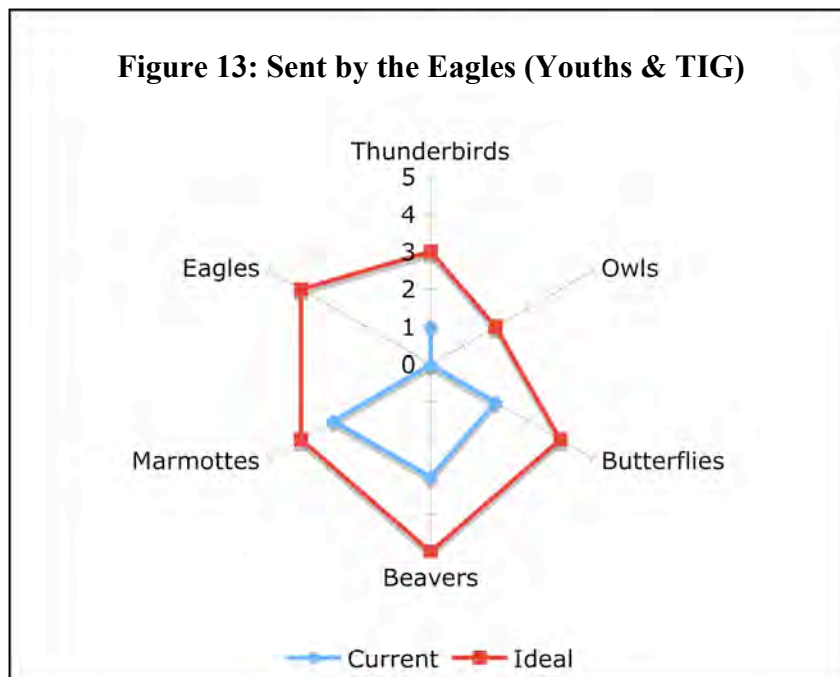


Figure 14: Sent by the Beavers (Coordinators)

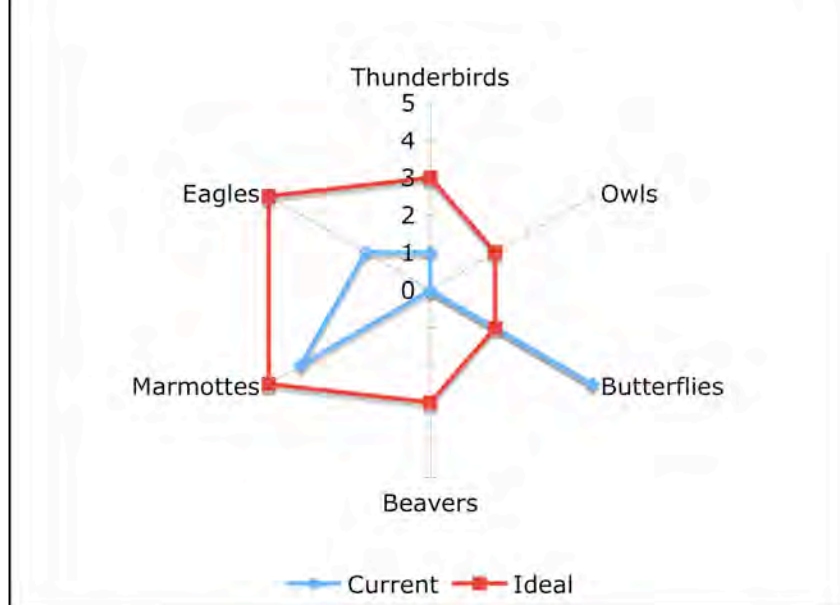


Figure 15: Sent by the Butterflies (DEs)

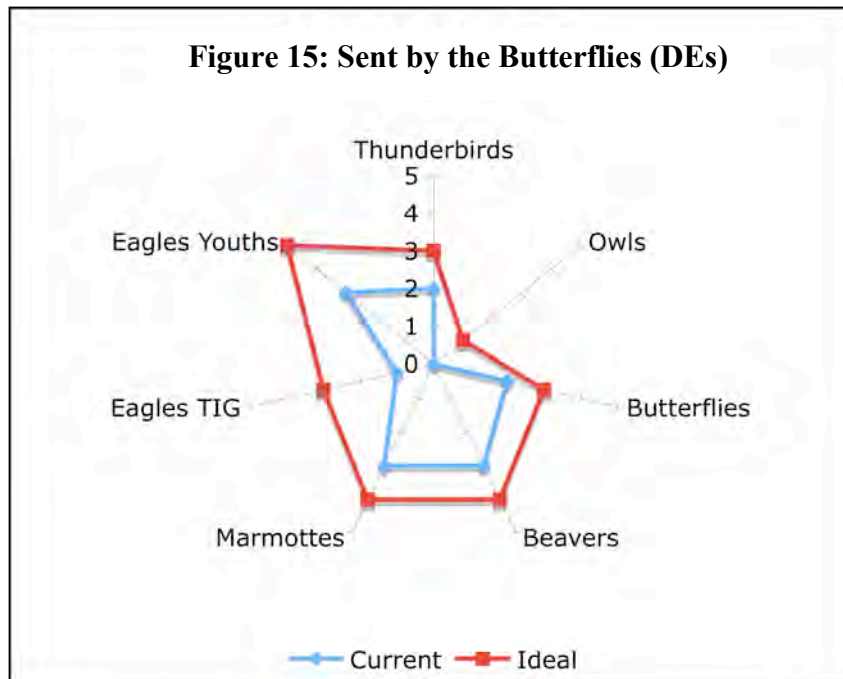


Figure 16: Sent by the Marmottes (Administrators)

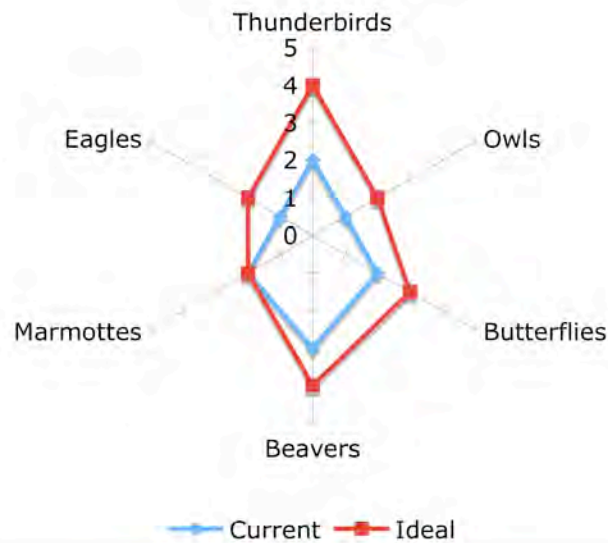


Figure 17: Sent by the Owls (Advisory)

